

The following papers were read ;

NOTES ON A NEW SPECIES OF DENDROPHIS FROM
CLEVELAND BAY.

BY WILLIAM MACLEAY, F.L.S.

During the last twelve months I have had sent to me, by Mr. Edward Spalding, from the Endeavour River and Cleveland Bay, several species of snakes, which I have not been able to identify with any of those hitherto described. I have, however, abstained from attempting a description of them, or even affixing cabinet names to them, until I became possessed of a sufficient number of specimens to enable me to trace the various changes in marking and coloration which snakes generally undergo at various stages of their existence.

In the case of the tree snake, of which I now exhibit a specimen, all necessary requirements in that respect have been fulfilled, for I have about eight examples representing the animal at various periods of its growth.

Two Australian species of the genus *Dendrophis* are known and have been described by Dr. Gunther, of the British Museum. *D. punctulata*, the well-known green tree snake of Sydney and the coast districts of New South Wales ; and *D. calligastra*, from Cape York, specimens of which I have also had from the Endeavour River.

The species now before you is from Townsville, Queensland, and as it is the most elongate and slender of the genus I have seen, I propose to give it the name of

DENDROPHIS GRACILIS.

The entire length of a full-grown specimen is about 4 feet, of which the tail is quite 14 inches and very taper. The abdominal plates number 212, and the subcandals over 130 in a double row. The head is one inch long, flat, and moderately narrowed behind. The superciliary shields abut prominently over the eyes, and the loreals are more nearly square and less elongate than in the other

two species. Dr. Gunther, I observe (Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist. Series 3, vol. 20, p. 53), describes *D. calligastra* as having no loreal ; but what I take to be the loreal shield in that species is of remarkable length.

The scales of the back are in thirteen rows, all elongate excepting the central and external ones. The abdominal plates are strongly bicarinated, making the central half of each quite flat ; this double ridge or keel is stronger than in the other two species and extends to the very tip of the tail.

The entire upper surface is of an olive black, the under surface is yellowish white, clouded more or less with black according to the age of the individual, the young specimens being much darker than the adult. In the specimen before you, which, though full grown, is probably not an old one, the first thirty or forty abdominal plates are without any black marking whatever, the next 100 plates or so are only slightly marked on each side near the ventral ridges, but every plate getting distinctly darker as you descend. The remainder are nearly black with their posterior edges, and a broad vitta outside of each ventral ridge white. The subcaudal plates have each a black patch at its point of contact with its opposite plate, presenting the appearance of a continuous black line of lozenge-shaped markings along the entire length of the tail. The upper labial shields are white, with the exception of the eighth and the upper portion of some of the others. The lower portion of the rostral shield is also white.

